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United Nations

Report of the Committee on the Rights of the Child

Sixty-sixth session
(26 May-13 June 2014)

Sixty-seventh session
(1-19 September 2014)

Sixty-eighth session
(12-30 January 2015)

Sixty-ninth session
(18 May-5 June 2015)

Seventieth session
(14 September-2 October 2015)

Seventy-first session
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General Assembly
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I. Organizational and other matters

A. States parties to the Convention

1. As at 29 January 2016, the closing date of the seventy-first session of the Committee on the Rights of the Child, there were 196 States parties to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, 3 more than at the time of the last report (Somalia, South Sudan and the State of Palestine). This makes it the most widely ratified human rights instrument, with only one ratification left to reach universal ratification, namely that of United States of America. An updated list of States that have signed, ratified or acceded to the Convention can be consulted at www.ohchr.org or http://treaties.un.org.

2. As at the same date, the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict had been ratified or acceded to by 162 States parties, 9 more than at the time of the last report, and the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography had been ratified or acceded to by 171 States parties, 5 more than at the time of the last report.

3. The Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on a communications procedure, adopted by the General Assembly on 19 December 2011, entered into force on 14 April 2014, three months after the deposit of the tenth instrument of ratification or accession, in accordance with article 19 (1) of the Optional Protocol. As at 29 January 2016, it had been ratified by 24 States, 14 more than the time of the last report. An updated list of States that have signed, ratified or acceded to the three Optional Protocols can be consulted at www.ohchr.org or http://treaties.un.org.

B. Sessions of the Committee

4. The Committee held six sessions since the adoption of its previous biennial report:[1] the sixty-sixth session (26 May-13 June 2014), sixty-seventh session (1-19 September 2014), sixty-eighth session (12-30 January 2015), sixty-ninth session (18 May-5 June 2015), seventieth session (14 September-2 October 2015) and seventy-first session (11-29 January 2016). Subsequent to each session, the Committee makes public all concluding observations adopted, as well as any decisions and recommendations (including those arising from a day of general discussion) and general comments adopted. The full text of those documents can be found at www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/CRC/Pages/CRCIndex.aspx.

C. Membership and officers of the Committee

5. From the sixty-sixth to the sixty-eighth session, the Committee maintained the same members and officers noted in its previous report to the General Assembly, with Kirsten Sandberg as the Chair.[2]

6. In accordance with article 43 of the Convention, the Fifteenth Meeting of States Parties to the Convention was convened on 25 June 2014 at United Nations Headquarters.

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[1] *Official Records of the General Assembly, Sixty-ninth Session, Supplement No. 41* (A/69/41).

[2] Ibid., annex I.

The following nine members of the Committee were elected or re-elected for a term of four years beginning on 1 March 2015: Suzanne Aho Assouma, Hynd Ayoubi Idrissi, Jorge Cardona Llorens, Bernard Gastaud, Hatem Kotrane, Gehad Madi, Clarence Nelson, José Angel Rodríguez Reyes and Kirsten Sandberg.

7. The list of the members of the Committee, with an indication of their term of office, appears in annex I to the present report. Annex I also indicates the officers elected at the sixty-ninth session of the Committee, including the new Chair, Benyam Dawit Mezmur.

D. Adoption of the report

8. At its 2103rd meeting, held on 29 January 2016, the Committee considered the draft of its thirteenth biennial report to the General Assembly, covering its activities from the sixty-sixth to the seventy-first session. The report was adopted unanimously by the Committee.

II. Reports by States parties under article 44 of the Convention, article 8 of the Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict and article 12 of the Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography

A. Submission of reports

9. The status of submission of reports and the adoption of related concluding observations can be found at: http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/TreatyBodyExternal/Countries.aspx.

10. As at 29 January 2016, the Committee had received 493 reports pursuant to article 44 of the Convention, including 198 initial and 295 periodic reports, as well as 105 initial State party reports and one second periodic report under the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict and 96 initial reports and one second periodic report under the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography. As at 29 January 2016, the backlog of reports to be considered by the Committee stood at 40 reports: 29 under the Convention, 3 under the Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict and 8 under the Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography.

B. Consideration of reports

11. At its sixty-sixth to the seventy-first sessions, the Committee considered 48 initial and periodic reports under the Convention, 17 initial reports under the Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict and 18 initial reports under the Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography.

12. The following table indicates, by session, the reports of States parties considered by the Committee during the period covered by the present report, including their respective document symbols. It further provides the document symbol of the concluding observations.

	State party report	Concluding observations
Sixty-sixth session, 26 May-13 June 2014		
Convention on the Rights of the Child		
India	CRC/C/IND/3-4	CRC/C/IND/CO/3-4
Indonesia	CRC/C/IDN/3-4	CRC/C/IDN/CO/3-4
Jordan	CRC/C/JOR/4-5	CRC/C/JOR/CO/4-5
Kyrgyzstan	CRC/C/KGZ/3-4	CRC/C/KGZ/CO/3-4
Saint Lucia	CRC/C/LCA/2-4	CRC/C/LCA/CO/2-4
Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict		
Jordan	CRC/C/OPAC/JOR/1	CRC/C/OPAC/JOR/CO/1
Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography		
Jordan	CRC/C/OPSC/JOR/1	CRC/C/OPSC/JOR/CO/1
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	CRC/C/OPSC/GBR/1	CRC/C/OPSC/GBR/CO/1
Sixty-seventh session, 1-19 September 2014		
Convention on the Rights of the Child		
Croatia	CRC/C/HRV/3-4	CRC/C/HRV/CO/3-4
Fiji	CRC/C/FJI/2-4	CRC/C/FJI/CO/2-4
Hungary	CRC/C/HUN/3-5	CRC/C/HUN/CO/3-5
Morocco	CRC/C/MAR/3-4	CRC/C/MAR/CO/3-4
Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	CRC/C/VEN/3-5	CRC/C/VEN/CO/3-5
Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict		
Hungary	CRC/C/OPAC/HUN/1	CRC/C/OPAC/HUN/CO/1
Morocco	CRC/C/OPAC/MAR/1	CRC/C/OPAC/MAR/CO/1
Singapore	CRC/C/OPAC/SGP/1	CRC/C/OPAC/SGP/CO/1
Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	CRC/C/OPAC/VEN/1	CRC/C/OPAC/VEN/CO/1
Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography		
Hungary	CRC/C/OPSC/HUN/1	CRC/C/OPSC/HUN/CO/1
Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	CRC/C/OPSC/VEN/1	CRC/C/OPSC/VEN/CO/1
Sixty-eighth session, 12-30 January 2015		
Convention on the Rights of the Child		
Colombia	CRC/C/COL/4-5	CRC/C/COL/CO/4-5

	State party report	*Concluding observations*
Dominican Republic	CRC/C/DOM/3-5	CRC/C/DOM/CO/3-5
Gambia	CRC/C/GMB/2-3	CRC/C/GMB/CO/2-3
Iraq	CRC/C/IRQ/2-4	CRC/C/IRQ/CO/2-4
Jamaica	CRC/C/JAM/3-4	CRC/C/JAM/CO/3-4
Mauritius	CRC/C/MUS/3-5	CRC/C/MUS/CO/3-5
Sweden	CRC/C/SWE/5	CRC/C/SWE/CO/5
Switzerland	CRC/C/CHE/2-4	CRC/C/CHE/CO/2-4
Turkmenistan	CRC/C/TKM/2-4	CRC/C/TKM/CO/2-4
United Republic of Tanzania	CRC/C/TZA/3-5	CRC/C/TZA/CO/3-5
Uruguay	CRC/C/URY/3-5	CRC/C/URY/CO/3-5
Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict		
Cambodia	CRC/C/OPAC/KHM/1	CRC/C/OPAC/KHM/CO/1
Iraq	CRC/C/OPAC/IRQ/1	CRC/C/OPAC/IRQ/CO/1
Turkmenistan	CRC/C/OPAC/TKM/1	CRC/C/OPAC/TKM/CO/1
Uruguay	CRC/C/OPAC/URY/1	CRC/C/OPAC/URY/CO/1
Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography		
Cambodia	CRC/C/OPSC/KHM/1	CRC/C/OPSC/KHM/CO/1
Iraq	CRC/C/OPSC/IRQ/1	CRC/C/OPSC/IRQ/CO/1
Switzerland	CRC/C/OPSC/CHE/1	CRC/C/OPSC/CHE/CO/1
Turkmenistan	CRC/C/OPSC/TKM/1	CRC/C/OPSC/TKM/CO/1
Uruguay	CRC/C/OPSC/URY/1	CRC/C/OPSC/URY/CO/1
Sixty-ninth session, 18 May–5 June 2015		
Convention on the Rights of the Child		
Eritrea	CRC/C/ERI/4	CRC/C/ERI/CO/4
Ethiopia	CRC/C/ETH/4-5	CRC/C/ETH/CO/4-5
Ghana	CRC/C/GHA/3-5	CRC/C/GHA/CO/3-5
Honduras	CRC/C/HND/4-5	CRC/C/HND/CO/4-5
Mexico	CRC/C/MEX/4-5	CRC/C/MEX/CO/4-5
Netherlands	CRC/C/NLD/4	CRC/C/NLD/CO/4
Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict		
Honduras	CRC/C/OPAC/HND/1	CRC/C/OPAC/HND/CO/1

	State party report	*Concluding observations*
Lao People's Democratic Republic	CRC/C/OPAC/LAO/1	CRC/C/OPAC/LAO/CO/1
Netherlands	CRC/C/OPAC/NLD/1	CRC/C/OPAC/NLD/CO/1
Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography		
Honduras	CRC/C/OPSC/HND/1	CRC/C/OPSC/HND/CO/1
Israel	CRC/C/OPSC/ISR/1	CRC/C/OPSC/ISR/CO/1
Lao People's Democratic Republic	CRC/C/OPSC/LAO/1	CRC/C/OPSC/LAO/CO/1
Seventieth session, 14 September-2 October 2015		
Convention on the Rights of the Child		
Bangladesh	CRC/C/BGD/5	CRC/C/BGD/CO/5
Brazil	CRC/C/BRA/2-4	CRC/C/BRA/CO/2-4
Chile	CRC/C/CHL/4-5	CRC/C/CHL/CO/4-5
Kazakhstan	CRC/C/KAZ/4	CRC/C/KAZ/CO/4
Poland	CRC/C/POL/3-4	CRC/C/POL/CO/3-4
Timor-Leste	CRC/C/TLS/2-3	CRC/C/TLS/CO/2-3
United Arab Emirates	CRC/C/ARE/2	CRC/C/ARE/CO/2
Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict		
Brazil	CRC/C/OPAC/BRA/1	CRC/C/OPAC/BRA/CO/1
Cuba	CRC/C/OPAC/CUB/1	CRC/C/OPAC/CUB/CO/1
Madagascar	CRC/C/OPAC/MDG/1	CRC/C/OPAC/MDG/CO/1
Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography		
Cuba	CRC/C/OPSC/CUB/1	CRC/C/OPSC/CUB/CO/1
Madagascar	CRC/C/OPSC/MDG/1	CRC/C/OPSC/MDG/CO/1
Seventy-first session, 11-29 January 2016		
Convention on the Rights of the Child		
Benin	CRC/C/BEN/3-5	CRC/C/BEN/CO/3-5
Brunei Darussalam	CRC/C/BRN/2-3	CRC/C/BRN/CO/2-3
France	CRC/C/FRA/5	CRC/C/FRA/CO/5
Haiti	CRC/C/HTI/2-3	CRC/C/HTI/CO/2-3
Iran (Islamic Republic of)	CRC/C/IRN/4-5	CRC/C/IRN/CO/4-5
Ireland	CRC/C/IRL/3-4	CRC/C/IRL/CO/3-4
Kenya	CRC/C/KEN/3-5	CRC/C/KEN/CO/3-5

	State party report	*Concluding observations*
Latvia	CRC/C/LVA/3-5	CRC/C/LVA/CO/3-5
Maldives	CRC/C/MDV/4-5	CRC/C/MDV/CO/4-5
Oman	CRC/C/OMN/3-4	CRC/C/OMN/CO/3-4
Peru	CRC/C/PER/4-5	CRC/C/PER/CO/4-5
Senegal	CRC/C/SEN/3-5	CRC/C/SEN/CO/3-5
Zambia	CRC/C/ZMB/2-4	CRC/C/ZMB/CO/2-4
Zimbabwe	CRC/C/ZWE/2	CRC/C/ZWE/CO/2
Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict		
Latvia	CRC/C/OPAC/LVA/1	CRC/C/OPAC/LVA/CO/1
Peru	CRC/C/OPAC/PER/1	CRC/C/OPAC/PER/CO/1
Holy See	CRC/C/OPAC/VAT/1	CRC/C/OPAC/VAT/CO/1
Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography		
Latvia	CRC/C/OPSC/LVA/1	CRC/C/OPSC/LVA/CO/1
Peru	CRC/C/OPSC/PER/1	CRC/C/OPSC/PER/CO/1 and Corr.1

13. The Government of Hungary sent its comments on the concluding observations on its combined third, fourth and fifth periodic reports (CRC/C/HUN/CO/3-5) on 25 February 2015. They may be found on the web page of the sixty-seventh session: http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/treatybodyexternal/SessionDetails1.aspx?SessionID=837&Lang=e.

14. The Government of Poland sent its comments on the concluding observations on its third and fourth periodic reports (CRC/C/POL/CO/3-4) on 10 March 2016. They may be found on the web page of the seventieth session: http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/treatybodyexternal/SessionDetails1.aspx?SessionID=828&Lang=en.

15. The Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran sent its comments on the concluding observations on its third and fourth periodic reports (CRC/C/IRN/CO/3-4) on 20 March 2016. They may be found on the web page of the seventy-first session: http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/treatybodyexternal/SessionDetails1.aspx?SessionID=924&Lang=en.

C. Progress achieved: trends and challenges of the implementation process

16. In accordance with its practice regarding its biennial reports, in the present section the Committee assesses achievements and challenges as well as current trends in children's rights. In particular, the Committee dedicates a subsection to public budgets to realize the rights of the child.

1. Progress achieved in general

17. During the period under review, the Committee on the Rights of the Child considered at six sessions a total of 83 reports under the Convention and the first two

Optional Protocols, 17 more than in the previous reporting period. In addition, it issued the first general comment jointly with another Committee (see para. 47 below). It also adopted its first decision on a communication under the Optional Protocol on a communications procedure.

18. On 24 September 2014, the Committee celebrated the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Convention as an online event with conversations between 28 children from 14 countries around the world and Committee members. The video sessions, as well as the short stories, poems, pictures, photos and videos sent by children to celebrate the twenty-fifth anniversary, may be viewed at www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/CRC/Pages/CRC25thAnniversary.aspx.

19. Between sessions, the Committee members were personally engaged in numerous activities. Those included participating in several meetings, conferences, seminars, lectures and courses. From 12 to 14 November 2014, the majority of the members of the Committee attended the Sixth World Congress on the Rights of Children and Adolescents in Puebla, Mexico. Additionally, many Committee members were involved in the follow-up to the concluding observations of the Committee in a number of countries upon invitation from States, civil society organizations and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). That work remains indispensable to guarantee a better application of the Convention and the three Optional Protocols thereto.

20. The Committee continued its work on the process initiated by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in 2009 on strengthening the treaty body system. At its sixty-sixth session, the Committee discussed the outcome of the treaty body strengthening process as adopted by the General Assembly in its resolution 68/268 on strengthening and enhancing the effective functioning of the human rights treaty body system in April 2014 and its implications for the Committee. In that regard, the Committee adopted at its 1928th meeting its decision No. 11 with regard to the simplified reporting procedure, the length of concluding observations and the appointment of a rapporteur on reprisals (for the full text of the decision, see annex II to the present report). In subsequent sessions, the Committee discussed how to offer the simplified reporting procedure to States parties in 2016, as stated in Committee's decision No. 11, and methods of work concerning days of general discussion and general comments.

2. Public budgets to realize the rights of the child

21. Over recent years, the Committee has noticed during the dialogue with States parties important progress made by State parties in reviewing domestic legislation, policies and programmes and bringing them into conformity with the provisions of the Convention and the Optional Protocols thereto. At the same time the Committee has underlined that the legislation, policies and programmes cannot be realized without sufficient financial resources mobilized and spent in an effective, efficient, equitable, transparent and sustainable way. Regrettably, more needs to be done by States, as emphasized by the Committee in almost all its dialogues with States parties, as well as in its concluding observations.

22. Likewise, the Committee repeatedly expressed its concern over the serious consequences on children's rights of the budgetary measures adopted in times of economic crisis.

23. For the above-mentioned reasons, the Committee decided to develop a general comment on the budgeting process, with a special focus on public spending. The overall objective of adopting the general comment is to improve understanding of the obligations deriving from the Convention in relation to budgeting for the rights of the child. The specific objective is to promote real change in the way budgets are planned for, enacted,

executed and followed up on in order to better implement the Convention and the Optional Protocols thereto.

24. The Committee undertook broad consultations in developing the general comment, including with representatives of the States parties to the Convention, other human rights treaty bodies and non-governmental organizations and human rights special procedure mandate holders working on children's rights and individual experts. At the same time, meetings and regional consultations were carried out in Asia, Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, the Middle East and North Africa and sub-Saharan Africa. Last, but not least, a global consultation was organized, with 2,693 children from 71 different countries contributing. Additionally, children of different backgrounds also attended regional consultations in Africa, Asia, Europe and Latin America.

25. The Committee is of the view that public resource mobilization and spending to realize the rights of the child must simultaneously respect the general principles of the Convention (the right to non-discrimination; the best interest of the child; the right to life, survival and development; the right to be heard) and the principles of public budgeting (effectiveness, efficiency, equity, transparency and sustainability). Budgets should thus ensure budgetary rigour, together with providing the content of all the rights recognized in the Convention.

26. The Committee is of the opinion that particular attention should be given to situations of economic crisis, in which States are often obliged to adopt measures to cut expenditure. States must, in those circumstances, take into consideration in particular the right of children to have their best interests taken into account as a primary consideration in the budgetary measures that concern them. Similarly, States should take measures to ensure, in any case the essential implementation of all rights for all children, in particular those who are in a situation of particular vulnerability.

27. The expression "to the maximum extent of their available resources" as used in the Convention to refer to the coment of the budgetary obligations in the field of economic, social and cultural rights, should lead States to take measures, if necessary also in the framework of international cooperation, to ensure the availability of sufficient and sustainable resources to guarantee those rights. In that regard, not only public spending, but also the resource mobilization systems, should take into account the obligations arising from the Convention.

28. While recognizing that the details of budget processes differ between States and that certain States have developed their own tailor-made child rights budgeting methods, the general comment provides some key points of guidance regarding four major stages of the budget process that concern all States: planning, enactment, execution and follow-up.

29. In drafting the general comment, the Committee realized that it must make very specific recommendations that allow all States to improve the way in which they plan, approve, execute and monitor their public budgets. That would guarantee all the rights of all children, with special attention given to children who are in situations of vulnerability. The Committee's intention with the general comment, therefore, is not just to make children visible in the texts setting out budgets, by being able to identify with precision which is the specific budget allocated to the guarantee of each of the rights contained in the Convention, but that children are visible throughout the budgetary process, with children and their rights present in the planning, enactment, execution and monitoring of all public budgets.

30. The Committee plans to approve the general comment in the course of 2016.

3. Trends and challenges

31. The Committee notes that, since the adoption of the Convention, the twenty-fifth anniversary of which was celebrated in 2014, the world in general has become a better place for children. The underlying values of the Convention, although tested on some occasions, are hardly questioned. Commitments to children in the areas of poverty, nutrition, health, education, water and sanitation and gender equality contained in the Millennium Development Goals have had a positive impact on millions of children, especially in the health and education sectors. The Committee welcomes the adoption on 25 September 2015 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which includes new goals and targets on child protection, early childhood education and reducing inequality. The Committee hopes that the Agenda will help States to implement further the provisions of the Convention and the Optional Protocols thereto.

32. Notwithstanding the improvements, too many children everywhere in the world are still facing significant challenges because their rights are not respected and, sometimes, are openly violated. Discrimination, both de jure and de facto, against children, such as girls, children with disabilities, children from ethnic, racial and religious minorities, children in poverty, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex children and non-national and stateless children, remains a serious challenge. Violence against children, in all its forms, continues to be widespread, including sexual and other forms of exploitation. In that regard, the Committee reiterates the recommendations made in its previous report.[3]

33. It also expresses its grave concern about the continued wide prevalence of harmful practices against children that are grounded in discrimination, including based on sex, gender and age, and have often been justified by invoking sociocultural and religious customs and values, in addition to misconceptions relating to some groups of children in disadvantaged situations, especially girls. The most prevalent and well-documented practices are female genital mutilation, child and forced marriage, crimes committed in the name of so-called honour and dowry-related violence. In a joint general comment No. 18 on harmful practices, adopted together with the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women on harmful practices, the Committee, for an effective prevention and elimination of harmful practices, recommended that States parties establish a well-defined, rights-based and locally relevant holistic strategy that includes supportive legal and policy measures, including social measures that are combined with commensurate political commitment and accountability at all levels.

34. The Committee reiterates its recommendations made with regard to other challenges highlighted in its previous report, in particular relating to children with disabilities and juvenile justice.[4] The Committee in particular notes with concern that, during the reporting period (1 February 2014-29 January 2016), a number of States parties introduced bills and laws that do not advance the object and purposes of the Convention, often reducing the minimum age of criminal responsibility below an internationally acceptable standard, imposing harsh penalties on children and not providing adequate substantive or procedural protection to all children below 18 years. Those trends are a very serious regression and cause for concern for the Committee.

35. The Committee is particularly worried by the worsening of the migration crisis during the reporting period and its negative impact on the rights of millions of children worldwide, including their right to life, survival and development. It is imperative that

[3] *Official Records of the General Assembly, Sixty-ninth Session, Supplement No. 41* (A/69/41), para. 26.

[4] *Official Records of the General Assembly, Sixty-ninth Session, Supplement No. 41* (A/69/41), paras. 27 and 29, respectively.

States parties adopt a child rights-based approach when planning, discussing and implementing measures designed to strengthen responses to migration. The right of the child to have his or her best interests taken as a primary consideration should serve as the underlying obligation with which all migration laws, policies and services in countries of origin, transit and destination must comply. In addition, the obligation to respect and protect the right of the child to freedom from all forms of violence — physical or mental, intentional or non-intentional — needs to be upheld by all governments and their branches in all contexts, including migration. Children and their families escaping from a situation of war and seeking refugee status should receive appropriate protection and humanitarian assistance in accordance with article 22 of the Convention and other relevant international human rights, as well as international humanitarian law.

36. The Committee is also concerned by the increasing use of detention of immigrant children and, in that regard, strongly urges all States parties to end that practice, which has negative impacts on the rights of children, including to health and education. It is further concerned at reports that, in 2015, thousands of unaccompanied children disappeared in Europe after registering with State authorities and may face greater risks of, inter alia, sexual exploitation and abuse. The Committee recommends that States parties should take appropriate measures to prevent such cases, including by ensuring that unaccompanied and separated children are properly identified; regularly inquiring as to their whereabouts; and conducting information campaigns that are age-appropriate, gender-sensitive and in a language and medium that can be understood by the child.

37. It is important to continue to integrate a child rights-based approach into the planning and implementation of child health policies, programmes and laws, including by applying the technical guidance on the application of a human rights-based approach to the implementation of policies and programmes to reduce and eliminate preventable mortality and morbidity of children under 5 years of age (A/HRC/27/31). While there is some notable progress in the field of health, such as immunization coverage, and reduction of malnutrition, progress is sometimes uneven, inadequate or confronted with emerging issues. For instance, while immunization reportedly averts between 2 and 3 million deaths annually, an additional 1.5 million deaths could be averted if global immunization coverage improved. A large number of adolescents who suffer from mental health disorders, poor nutrition, substance abuse, HIV/AIDS and chronic illness lack access to critical prevention and care services. Recent health emergencies such as Ebola and the Zika virus, as well as environment-related causes and conditions, including exposure to environmental toxicants and air pollution, have continued to negatively affect the right to life, survival and development of children. Climate change is already having a negative impact on the well-being of millions of children, in particular owing to droughts, floods and severe weather events.

38. The need to ensure the full application of the provisions of the Convention and the Optional Protocols thereto to the digital environment and provide all stakeholders with important guidance for the realization of children's rights online is an even more pressing issue today than before. In particular, sexual exploitation online, which can take many forms, including the creation, publication and distribution of sexual abuse material (child pornography) continues to pose serious challenges for the protection of children. Among other issues, the lack of systematic implementation of the necessary legislation and subsequent action at the national level, forms of Internet governance that continue to prove somewhat fragile and uneven and the fact that the Internet is largely blind to age seem to compound the problem.

39. The Committee is concerned about the low pace of ratification of and accession to, as well as reporting under, the Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict and the Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child

pornography. During the reporting period, only nine States ratified or acceded to the Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict and five States ratified/acceded to the Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography. It is a serious cause of concern for the Committee that 70 initial reports are still overdue for the Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography and more than 50 for the Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict. With respect to the Optional Protocol on a communications procedure, which entered into force in April 2014, the Committee notes that, despite the number of signatures standing at 50, the number of ratifications and accessions remains at 24.

III. Activities carried out under the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on a communications procedure

40. Article 16 of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on a communications procedure provides that the Committee shall include in its report submitted every two years to the General Assembly a summary of its activities carried out under this Optional Protocol.

A. Action taken by the Committee in respect of issues arising under article 5 of the Optional Protocol

41. The Committee started receiving its first individual communications under article 5 of the Optional Protocol. At its sixty-ninth session, the Committee adopted by consensus an inadmissibility decision on communication No. 1/2014 (*A.H.A. v. Spain*). The decision is available through the Official Document System of the United Nations (http://documents.un.org/) under the symbol CRC/C/69/D/1/2014.

B. Action taken by the Committee in respect of issues arising under article 13 of the Optional Protocol

42. Since the entry into force of the Optional Protocol, the Committee has received two requests for inquiry. In relation to the submission received on 17 September 2015 and registered as No. 2015/1, the Committee was informed that an additional submission will be received from the source of information and hence its consideration has been postponed. In relation to the request for inquiry received on 12 November 2015 and registered as No. 2015/2, in January 2016, at its seventy-first session, the Committee took a decision to discontinue the request. The decision was transmitted to the source of information.

IV. Overview of the other activities of the Committee

A. Methods of work

1. Sessions in parallel chambers

43. In 2015, the Committee held two sessions in parallel chambers. The sixty-eighth session (January 2015) in parallel chambers was authorized by General Assembly resolution 67/167. The sixty-ninth session (May-June 2015) in parallel chambers was a result of General Assembly resolution 68/268, which allocated three additional weeks of

meeting time to the Committee. That allowed the Committee to reduce its backlog during the reporting period from 95 to 39 reports.

2. New rules of procedure and working methods

44. At its sixty-eighth session, the Committee revised its rules of procedure (CRC/C/4/Rev.4) in order to amend rule 17 on "Officers" and rule 23 on "Term of office".

45. At its seventieth session, the Committee adopted the working methods to deal with communications received under the Optional Protocol on a communications procedure, as well as the model form for filing a complaint.

3. General comments

46. At its sixty-seventh session, the Committee adopted the joint general comment No. 18 (2015) on harmful practices, developed together with the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.

47. In addition, the Committee is continuing its work on the draft general comments on public budgets to realize the right of the child and on adolescents.

48. At its sixty-sixth session, the Committee decided to embark on the drafting of a new general comment on children in street situations. At its sixty-ninth session, the Committee decided to consider the elaboration of a new joint general comment, together with the Committee on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, on children in the context of international migration.

4. Informal meetings with States

49. At its sixty-ninth session, on 3 June 2015, the Committee held its seventh informal meeting with States in Palais des Nations. Fifty-two States attended. At the same session, the Committee decided to hold the informal meeting with States regularly every year during its January session. The eighth informal meeting with States was thus held on 27 January 2016. More than seventy States attended.

5. Press releases

50. During the reporting period, the Committee issued 18 press releases, 9 alone and 9 jointly with other treaty bodies or special procedures. Press releases were issued to mark the Universal Children's Day (20 November), the awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize to children rights' defenders and the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Convention. The Committee issued a press release on the entry into force of the Optional Protocol on a communications procedure and the ratification of the Convention by Somalia and South Sudan. Other press releases focused on specific situations related to children's rights in Australia, the Central African Republic, the European Union, Nigeria, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, as well as Gaza. All press releases issued by the Committee are available from www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/newssearch.aspx?MID=Committ_Rights_Child.

5. Introduction meeting for new members

51. On 15 May 2015, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights held an orientation meeting for the four newly elected members. The current and the former Chairs of the Committee contributed to the orientation programme.

B. International cooperation and solidarity for the implementation of the Convention

1. Cooperation with United Nations and other competent bodies

52. During the period covered by the present report, the Committee pursued its active cooperation with United Nations bodies, specialized agencies and other competent bodies. It held meetings with the United Nations agencies and bodies and other competent bodies and representatives listed below:

(a) United Nations agencies and bodies:

- UNICEF: On 27 January 2016, the Committee held its fifth biennial meeting with UNICEF, which included representatives from UNICEF Headquarters, as well as Regional and Deputy Regional Directors, to seek ways to enhance the existing cooperation between the Committee and UNICEF (seventy-first session). In addition, the Committee was briefed by UNICEF on: the development of a guide for governments on the Committee's general comment No. 16 (2013) on State obligations regarding the impact of the business sector on children's rights, and issues concerning child rights education and access to justice (seventieth session); and on a practical tool for budget tracking for children (seventy-first session);
- Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights: the Committee held regular meetings with the Office to discuss the outcome of the treaty body strengthening process. It also held a meeting with the High Commissioner during the sixty-eighth session and received briefings during the reporting period on human rights indicators, the process for monitoring and reviewing the Sustainable Development Goals, updates regarding the Human Rights Council and issues related to children's rights.

(b) Others:

- Executive Committee of Child Rights Connect (sixty-sixth, sixty-eighth, sixty-ninth and seventieth sessions)
- Consortium for Street Children, for a presentation on children in street situations (sixty-sixth session)
- Terres des Hommes, Save the Children and UNICEF, for a presentation on minimum standards for child protection in humanitarian action (sixty-sixth session)
- Conflict Dynamics International, for a presentation on the Children in Armed Conflict Accountability Initiative (sixty-sixth session)
- Interagency Panel on Juvenile Justice (sixty-sixth session)
- Representatives of the Global Campaign to End Child Immigration Detention (sixty-sixth session)
- Child Helpline International, for the launch of the report "Improving the world for children" (sixty-seventh session)
- Professor Jaap Doek, on behalf of ECPAT International, for a presentation on the terminology and semantics project (sixty-eighth session)
- StopIGM.org, for a presentation on intersex genital mutilations (sixty-eighth session)

- Women's Refugee Commission and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, for a briefing on the Global Campaign for Equal Nationality Rights (sixty-ninth session)
- Centre for Reproductive Rights, for a briefing on children's evolving capacity in the context of sexual and reproductive information and services (sixty-ninth session)
- Child Rights Information Network, for a presentation of a paper on the right to information (sixty-ninth session)
- Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment of Children (sixty-ninth session)
- Global Initiative for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, for a briefing on privatization of education (sixty-ninth session)
- Defence for Children International, for a briefing on the global study on children deprived of liberty (seventieth session)
- Tilburg University and Institute on Statelessness and Inclusion, for a briefing on statelessness (seventieth session)
- Global Reference Group on Accountability to Child Rights and Well-being, to discuss indicators for children's rights (seventieth session)
- International Baby Food Action Network, FIAN International and UNICEF, for a presentation on breastfeeding and infant-feeding (seventy-first session)
- Defence for Children International, for the launch of the guide on monitoring child detention facilities (seventy-first session)
- Non-governmental organizations' Working group on Children and Violence against Children, for a briefing on the Sustainable Development Goals and violence against children (seventy-first session)
- Child Rights Information Network, for the launch of the Access to Justice project (seventy-first session).

53. With respect to cooperation with other United Nations human rights mechanisms and special procedures, the Committee held meetings with the following experts:

- Committee on Enforced Disappearances, in a joint session to celebrate Estela de Carlotto, Chair of the Grandmothers of the Plaza de Mayo (sixty-seventh session)
- Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, in a side event on participation of children with intellectual disabilities (sixty-seventh session)
- Committee on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families (sixty-seventh session)
- Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Leila Zerrougui (sixty-seventh session)
- Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, Maud de Boer-Buquicchio (sixty-seventh session)
- Special Rapporteur on the implications for human rights of the environmentally sound management and disposal of hazardous substances and wastes, Başkut Tuncak (sixty-ninth session)
- Members of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, in the context of a meeting organized by the Geneva Academy of International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights (seventieth session)

- Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children, Marta Santos Pais (seventieth session)
- Independent Expert on human rights and international solidarity, Virginia Dandan (seventieth session).

2. Participation in United Nations and other relevant meetings

54. In 2014, the Chair of the Committee, Ms. Sandberg, participated in the twenty-sixth meeting of the Chairs of the human rights treaty bodies in Geneva. In 2015, the Chair of the Committee, Mr. Mezmur, represented the Committee at the twenty-seventh meeting of the Chairs of the human rights treaty bodies, which took place in San José, Costa Rica.

55. The Chair of the Committee, Ms. Sandberg, was one of the speakers at the high-level session of the sixty-ninth session of the General Assembly dedicated to the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Convention, held at United Nations Headquarters in New York on 20 November 2014.

56. Members of the Committee participated in a variety of meetings at the international, regional and national levels, where issues relevant to the rights of the child were raised.

3. Other related activities

57. The Committee recommended in its previous biennial report[5] that the Secretary-General be requested, through the General Assembly, to conduct an in-depth international study on children deprived of their liberty, in accordance with article 45 (c) of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. In that regard, the General Assembly in its resolution 69/157 on the rights of the child, invited the Secretary-General to commission an in-depth global study on children deprived of liberty, a request further reaffirmed by the General Assembly in its resolution 70/137.

58. The Committee participates in the task force established to support the preparation of the global study and looks forward to the materialization and expediting of the necessary resource mobilization and cooperation by States and other stakeholders to enable the development of that important study.

C. General thematic discussions

59. In accordance with rule 79 of its rules of procedure, the Committee holds a day of general discussion on the second Friday of its September session. At its sixty-seventh session, on 12 September 2014, the thematic discussion was dedicated to digital media and children's rights. The day of general discussion was attended by over 200 participants, including States, civil society actors in the areas of child rights and of digital media, and child representatives. A summary of the discussions, the list of participants and the set of related recommendations (for the full text of the recommendations, see annex III to the present report) adopted by the Committee at its sixty-eighth session can be found on the web page of the Committee: www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/CRC/Pages/Discussion2014.aspx.

[5] *Official Records of the General Assembly, Sixty-ninth Session, Supplement No. 41* (A/69/41), para. 48 and annex II.

60. At its sixty-second session, the Committee decided to hold days of general discussion every two years. Therefore, its next day of general discussion, on children's rights and the environment, will be held on 23 September 2016 at the Palais des Nations, Geneva.

Annexes

Annex I

Membership of the Committee on the Rights of the Child

Name of member	*Country of nationality*
Suzanne **Aho Assouma***	Togo
Amal **Aldoseri***	Bahrain
Hynd **Ayoubi Idrissi****	Morocco
Jorge **Cardona Llorens****	Spain
Bernard **Gastaud****	Monaco
Peter **Gurán***	Slovakia
Olga A. **Khazova***	Russian Federation
Hatem **Kotrane****	Tunisia
Gehad **Madi****	Egypt
Benyam **Mezmur***	Ethiopia
Yasmeen **Muhamad Shariff***	Malaysia
Clarence **Nelson****	Samoa
Wanderlino **Nogueira Neto***	Brazil
Sara **Oviedo Fierro***	Ecuador
José Angel **Rodríguez Reyes****	Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela
Kirsten **Sandberg****	Norway
Maria Rita **Parsi***	Italy
Renate **Winter***	Austria

* Term expires 28 February 2017.
** Term expires 28 February 2019.

Bureau of the Committee on the Rights of the Child 2015-2017

Chair	Mr. Mezmur
Vice-Chair	Ms. Aldoseri
Vice-Chair	Ms. Muhamad Shariff
Vice-Chair	Ms. Oviedo Fierro
Vice-Chair	Ms. Winter
Rapporteur	Ms. Sandberg

Annex II

Decision No. 11

Follow-up of resolution 68/268 on strengthening and enhancing the effective functioning of the human rights treaty body system

At its 1928th meeting, the Committee, taking note of General Assembly resolution 68/268 on strengthening and enhancing the effective functioning of the human rights treaty body system and of the outcome of the meeting of the twenty-sixth annual meeting of the Chairs of the human rights treaty bodies decided to:

1. *Adopt* in principle a simplified reporting procedure and to offer that optional procedure to States parties in 2016, having first reduced the backlog of reports awaiting consideration in 2015;

2. *Follow* the format of concluding observations proposed by the meeting of the Chairs and to work to reduce the word length of concluding observations by 20 per cent from the current average length by the end of 2015;

3. *Appoint* a member of the Committee as rapporteur on reprisals to deal with allegations of reprisals against individuals and groups on the basis of their cooperation with the Committee.

[*Adopted on 19 September 2014*]

Annex III

Recommendations from the 2014 day of general discussion on children's rights and digital media

1. In the light of the objective for the day of general discussion of it being a forum for raising awareness about, and discussing, children's rights in order to identify issues for States to take account of in their policies and programmes, as well as to provide guidance to other relevant actors on the respect, promotion and fulfilment of children's rights in the context of digital media, the Committee issues the following recommendations. The recommendations below, while addressed to the primary duty bearers — States — also require the active engagement and participation of other stakeholders, including families, schools, civil society and the private sector.

General recommendations, including legislation, policies and coordination

2. States should recognize the importance of access to, and use of, digital media and information and communications technologies for children and their potential to promote all children's rights, in particular the rights to freedom of expression, access to appropriate information, participation and education, as well as rest, leisure, play, recreational activities, cultural life and the arts. In addition, States should ensure that equal and safe access to digital media and information and communications technologies, including the Internet, is integrated in the post-2015 development agenda.

3. States should adopt and effectively implement comprehensive human rights-based laws and policies which integrate children's access to digital media and information and communications technologies and ensure the full protection under the Convention and its Optional Protocols when using digital media and information and communications technologies. In the light of the evolving nature of the issue, States should also ensure regular monitoring of implementation and assessment of legislation and policies.

4. States are called upon to promote and facilitate regular public debates and the active involvement of all stakeholders, in particular children, parents and other caretakers, professionals working with or for children, including in the educational field, civil society and information and communications technology and other relevant industries, before adopting draft laws, policies, strategies and programmes and when setting up services for child victims. It is furthermore recommended that States effectively evaluate the impact of digital media and information and communications technology-related policies, programmes, practices and decisions on the rights, well-being and development of all children. States should thereby ensure that the fundamental principles of the Convention, including the right to non-discrimination, the right to have the child's best interests taken as a primary consideration, the right to life, survival and development and children's right to express their views in matters affecting them, are effectively prioritized and meaningfully implemented.

5. States should adopt a national coordinating framework with a clear mandate and sufficient authority to coordinate all activities related to children's rights and digital media and information and communications technologies at cross-sectoral, national, regional and local levels and facilitate international cooperation. States should also ensure that said coordinating body is provided with the necessary human, technical and financial resources for its effective operation.

Data collection and research, monitoring and evaluation of efforts

6. States should undertake research, data collection and analysis on an ongoing basis to better understand how children access and use digital and social media, as well as their impact on children's lives. The data should cover both risks and opportunities for children and should be disaggregated by age, sex, geographic location, socioeconomic background, disability, membership of a minority and/or indigenous group, ethnic origin or any other category considered appropriate in order to facilitate analysis of the situation of all children, particularly those in situations of vulnerability.

7. The Committee recommends that the data be used for establishing baselines against which progress can be measured, for the formulation and evaluation of relevant laws, policies, programmes and projects and for the monitoring of their implementation. States should also ensure safeguards for guaranteeing that these data are not used by authorities to encourage censorship or any other political and economic interference.

8. The Committee furthermore recommends that States promote the exchange and sharing of ideas, information, experiences and good practices, including through the creation of platforms, with all stakeholders, especially children, at the national, regional and international level.

Independent monitoring

9. States should empower and provide adequate resources to national institutions responsible for guaranteeing human rights (such as national human rights institutions, ombudspersons or equality bodies) to allow them to play a key role in monitoring compliance with the Convention and the Optional Protocols thereto. Such an institution should have a specific mandate to address the rights of children in relation to digital media and information and communications technologies, and be able to receive, investigate and address complaints by children in a child-sensitive manner, ensure the privacy and protection of victims, and undertake monitoring, follow-up and verification activities for child victims.

Cooperation with civil society

10. The Committee recognizes the important role played by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in ensuring access of children to information and communications technologies and digital media and protecting their rights when using these means. It recommends that States systematically involve all NGOs working in the field of digital media and children's rights in the development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of relevant laws, policies and programmes, as well as in research and data collection.

Awareness-raising and training

11. The Committee recommends that States carry out age appropriate awareness-raising programmes to sensitize the public in general and children in particular to opportunities and risks, including unintended consequences of self-generated content, relating to the use of information and communications technologies and digital media. States should distribute relevant information material tailored specifically to children, and tailored to specific age-groups, as well as to parents and other caregivers, and all professionals working with or for children, and seek close cooperation with civil society in the organization and implementation of awareness-raising programmes.

12. The Committee further recommends that States provide adequate training and support for children to ensure the development of their digital and social literacy skills with a view to enhancing a responsible use of digital media and information and communications technologies, as well as their capacity to avoid risks and protect

themselves from harm. States should also provide adequate training and support to parents and other caregivers, as well as professionals working with and for children including in the educational field, to enhance their technical skills, inform them about risks and potential harm, learn about how children use technology and be able to support children in using digital media and information and communications technologies in a responsible and safe manner.

Children's rights and the business sector

13. In the light of the Committee's general comment No. 16 (2013) on State obligations regarding the impact of the business sector on children's rights, as well as other international norms and standards in that area, States should ensure a clear and predictable legal and regulatory environment that requires information and communications technologies and other relevant industries operating in the State party to respect children's rights. States should also establish monitoring mechanisms for the investigation and redress of children's rights violations, with a view to improving accountability of information and communications technology and other relevant companies, as well as strengthen regulatory agencies' responsibility for the development of standards relevant to children's rights and information and communications technologies.

14. The Committee recommends that States require businesses to undertake child-rights due diligence with a view to identifying, preventing and mitigating their impact on children's rights when using digital media and information and communications technologies. Moreover, States should encourage and facilitate the development of voluntary, self-regulatory, professional and ethical guidelines and standards of conduct and other initiatives, such as the development of technical solutions promoting online safety and the adoption of child-friendly terms and conditions for the use of information and communications technologies and digital media, as well as developing age-appropriate content, by information and communications technology and other relevant industries to ensure that their practices are in full compliance with the Convention and the Optional Protocols thereto and other international human rights norms and standards. In addition, it is recommended that States ensure space for discussion and cooperation with information and communications technology and other relevant industry.

Non-discrimination

15. States should ensure that all children within their jurisdiction, in particular girls, children with disabilities, children living in remote areas, children living in poverty, children belonging to minorities, indigenous children, children living in street situations, children living in institutions and other children in vulnerable and marginalized situations, have access to digital media and information and communications technologies without discrimination. In particular, the Committee recommends that States inter alia:

(a) Take measures to improve the coverage of Internet infrastructure to include rural communities;

(b) Promote inclusive accessibility to digital media and information and communications technologies and affordable design of technology and digital content, taking into consideration age, and ensure that intellectual property rights do not constitute an unreasonable or discriminatory barrier to access by children to cultural materials, in particular children with disabilities and children belonging to minorities or indigenous groups;

(c) Promote linguistic and cultural diversity of digital content;

(d) Intensify efforts to ensure the effective elimination of all forms of discrimination against girls and address gender stereotypes and social norms that limit girls' access and use of technology, including through awareness-raising programmes;

(e) Provide assistance to schools and communities to cover the costs of computer equipment and connectivity and promote the development of low-cost technical solutions;

(f) Include in non-discrimination laws, policies, strategies and programmes aspects dealing with access for children to digital media and information and communications technologies, in particular children belonging to most vulnerable and disadvantaged groups. In that regard, the Committee recommends that States seek technical cooperation from, among others, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the International Telecommunications Union and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

Respect for the views of the child

16. States should ensure that children are consulted in order to take into account their views and experiences in developing laws, policies and programmes and in the setting up of services, and other measures relating to digital media and information and communications technologies. That should include girls as well as boys, and children in vulnerable or marginalized situations. Children should also be actively engaged in the design and implementation of initiatives aimed at fostering safe use of digital media and information and communications technologies, including online safety. In particular, States are encouraged to establish online spaces, where children can express their views and opinions in a responsible and safe manner.

Rights to freedom of expression, access to appropriate information, freedom of association and peaceful assembly

17. The Committee calls upon States to revise their national laws, regulations and policies that limit children's rights to freedom of expression, access to appropriate information as well as association and peaceful assembly in any setting, including the online environment, to align them with the Convention and other international human rights norms and standards.

18. States should furthermore actively promote children's rights to freedom of expression, access to appropriate information and association and peaceful assembly in all settings, including the online environment. In particular, States should promote the creation of channels for child-led activism, as well as educational and recreational content for children of different ages, including content produced by children themselves.

Right to privacy

19. States should guarantee the protection of children's rights to privacy in relation to digital media and information and communications technologies and develop effective safeguards against abuse without unduly restricting the full enjoyment of their rights laid down under the Convention. States should also develop and strengthen awareness-raising programmes for children on privacy risks related to the use of digital media and information and communications technologies and regarding self-generated content.

20. The Committee moreover recommends that States ensure that all children have meaningful and child-friendly information about how their data is being gathered, stored, used and potentially shared with others. In this regard, States should ensure that age-appropriate privacy settings, with clear information and warnings, are available for children using digital media and information and communications technologies.

Access to appropriate information

21. States should encourage the mass media, including private media, to disseminate information and materials of social and cultural benefit to the child, for example regarding healthy lifestyles.

Protection against harm, including violence, exploitation and abuse of children

22. States should address the risks posed by digital media and information and communications technologies to the safety of children, including online harassment, sexual exploitation of children, access to violent and sexual content, grooming and self-generated sexual content, through holistic strategies that ensure the full enjoyment of their rights laid down under the Convention and the Optional Protocols thereto. States should thereby always ensure a balance between promoting the opportunities provided by digital media and information and communications technologies, and protecting children from harm. In particular, States should:

(a) Develop and strengthen programmes aimed at preventing harm and tackling risks posed by digital media and information and communications technologies, including by involving children, former victims, relevant NGOs and the information and communications technology and other relevant industries;

(b) Provide children with age-appropriate information regarding safety when using digital media and information and communications technologies, so they can manage the risks and know where to go for help;

(c) Coordinate with the information and communications technology industry so that it develops and puts in place adequate measures to protect children from violent and inappropriate material and other risks posed by digital media and information and communications technologies to children;

(d) Further strengthen awareness-raising and education programmes for children on preventing and responding to risks when they use digital media and information and communications technologies, with the involvement of children, including through the development of child-friendly information material;

(e) Provide adequate and continuous training for law enforcement personnel, members of the judiciary and professionals working with and for children with the aim to enhance their technical skills;

(f) Ensure accessible, safe, confidential, age-appropriate, child-friendly and effective reporting channels, such as child hotlines, for reporting violations of children's rights in relation to digital media and information and communications technologies;

(g) Provide safe, child-friendly and confidential points of contact for children to report self-generated sexual content to a relevant authority;

(h) Provide fast and effective procedures for removal of prejudicial or harmful material involving children;

(i) Strengthen identification of victims as well as detection, investigation, prosecution and punishment of those responsible for any of the offences covered under the Convention and the Optional Protocols thereto;

(j) Strengthen coordination between all actors and sectors in the protection system ensuring referral of cases and effective support to children victims;

(k) Promote and facilitate international and regional coordination and collaboration to ensure effective enforcement of the applicable legal framework.

Effective remedies and reparation, and assistance to victims

23. States should ensure access to effective remedies for child victims, including assistance to seek prompt and appropriate reparation for the harm suffered, through providing State compensation where appropriate. States should also provide adequate support and assistance for child victims of violations related to digital media and information and communications technologies, including comprehensive services to ensure the child's full recovery and reintegration, and prevent revictimization of child victims.

Family environment

24. States should provide training, assistance and support services to parents, other caretakers and legal guardians to enable them to guide their children to a responsible and safe use of digital media and information and communications technologies, with respect for their evolving capacities. Training and support should not be limited to technical competence but should also include support in the performance of their general child-rearing responsibilities.

Children with disabilities

25. The Committee recommends that States develop, implement and monitor legislation and policies to ensure the accessibility of digital media and information and communications technologies for children with disabilities including by incorporating accessibility requirements in policies related to the private sector, international cooperation and public procurement. In that context, States should ensure that public funds are used solely to promote the enjoyment and use of digital media and information and communications technologies and explicitly avoid creating or perpetuating discrimination resulting from inaccessible services and products. Moreover, States should promote the use of digital media and information and communications technologies to reinforce the creation of inclusive communities and education systems and to combat the dissemination of negative stereotypes, including by actively consulting with children with disabilities. The Committee also recommends that States ratify the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Marrakesh Treaty to Facilitate Access to Published Works for Persons who are Blind, Visually Impaired, or otherwise Print Disabled.

Education

26. The Committee recommends that States promote the development of digital literacy as part of the basic education curricula in accordance with children's evolving capacities. Training and education should not be limited to technical competence but should also include awareness of ethical principles and values and teach children skills to behave responsibly when they engage and relate to each other online, and to respond to risks appropriately and safely (social literacy). In addition, the Committee recommends that States ensure that sexual and reproductive health education is part of the mandatory school curriculum and targeted at adolescent girls and boys.

Periodic reporting under the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Optional Protocols thereto

27. The Committee recommends that States parties systematically include information on children's rights and digital media and information and communications technologies in their periodic reports under the Convention and the Optional Protocols thereto.

Conclusion

28. The Committee appreciates the valuable input provided by all participants both during the discussions or as written submissions for the day of general discussion. The Committee urges all stakeholders to take account of the recommendations above. All children should be able to safely access information and communications technologies and digital media, and be empowered to fully participate, express themselves, seek information and enjoy all the rights enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Optional Protocols thereto without discrimination of any kind.

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